

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 175323

EXDIS FROM UNA

FOLLOWING REPEAT MOSCOW 15961 ACTION SECSTATE INFO GENEVA
LENINGRAD DATED JUL 10:

QTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 15961

EXDIS

GENEVA FOR AMBASSADOR TOON

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, SHUM, PEPR, UR

SUBJECT: THE GINZBURG AND SHCHARANSKIY TRIALS: WHY
TOGETHER AND WHY NOW?

1. THE SOVIET DECISION TO TRY BOTH GINZBURG AND
SHCHARANSKIY AT THE SAME TIME AND TO SCHEDULE THE
TRIALS TO BEGIN JUST TWO DAYS BEFORE THE OPENING
OF ANOTHER ROUND OF HIGH-LEVEL SALT NEGOTIA-
TIONS IN GENEVA STRIKES US AS BOTH HIGHLY UNUSUAL
AND CAREFULLY CONSIDERED. FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE,
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THE CONSIDERATIONS THAT WENT INTO THE DECISION
PROBABLY INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

-- THE SOVIET LEADERS PROBABLY DECIDED THAT SIMULTANEOUS
TRIALS WOULD CAUSE LESS DAMAGE TO THEIR INTERNATIONAL
IMAGE THAN CONSECUTIVE TRIALS. THEY CALCULATED --
AND FROM WHAT WE CAN SEE OF WESTERN PRESS REPORTS

THUS FAR APPARENTLY CORRECTLY -- THAT THE GREAT BULK OF WESTERN ATTENTION WOULD GO TO THE SHCHARANSKIY TRIAL IF IT OCCURRED AT THE SAME TIME AS THAT OF GINZBURG, WHEREAS THE LATTER'S TRIAL, LIKE THAT OF ORLOV BEFORE HIM, WOULD GARNER SIGNIFICANT WESTERN ATTENTION IF IT OCCURRED ALONE.

-- THEY PROBABLY DO NOT EXPECT AGREEMENT ON SALT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IF THAT IS THEIR JUDGMENT, SINCE THEY HAVE COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO HOLDING THE TRIALS, THIS MAY SEEM A "GOOD" TIME TO GET THEM OUT OF THE WAY.

-- WITH LITTLE HOPE FOR AN EARLY SALT AGREEMENT OR FOR CHANGES IN U.S. TRADE LEGISLATION AND WITH THE CURRENT LOW STATE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS, THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP MAY HAVE DECIDED THAT IT HAS LITTLE AT PRESENT TO GAIN BY TREATING DISSIDENTS CAREFULLY, AND LITTLE TO LOSE BY TREATING THEM HARSHLY.

-- BY CHOOSING TO BEGIN THE TRIALS TWO DAYS BEFORE THE GENEVA TALKS, THE LEADERSHIP LEAVES A CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT IT WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY LINKAGE BETWEEN SALT AND HOW IT HANDLES INTERNAL DISSIDENCE AND THAT IT WILL NOT BE INTERFERED BY WESTERN CONFIDENTIAL

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PRESSURE FROM DEALING WITH DISSIDENTS AS IT SEES FIT.

-- FINALLY, IF THE REGIME HAS ANY SERIOUS HOPE OF PARTICIPATING IN A SWAP FOR ITS TWO ARRESTED U.N. EMPLOYEES WHICH WOULD INCLUDE SHCHARANSKIY, FOR BOTH DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PROPAGANDA PURPOSES IT NO DOUBT WOULD PREFER THAT HE BE CONVICTED OF ESPIONAGE BEFORE THE SWAP. A TRIAL AND CONVICTION NOW WOULD BE DESIRABLE, AGAIN FOR PROPAGANDA PURPOSES, IF IT WOULD MAKE POSSIBLE AN EXCHANGE OF SHCHARANSKIY, THE CONVICTED "TRAITOR", FOR TWO SOVIET U.N. EMPLOYEES, NOT YET BROUGHT TO TRIAL.

2. IT IS DIFFICULT FOR US TO JUDGE AT THIS POINT WHERE THE SOVIETS THINK THIS POLICY WILL LEAD, SINCE WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY HAVE IN MIND FOR SHCHARANSKIY AND GINZBURG, OR WHETHER THEY WILL BE AMENABLE TO ARRANGING AN EXCHANGE SHORTLY AFTER THE TRIALS. WE FIND PARTICULARLY DISTURBING, HOWEVER, THE DELIBERATELY CALLOUS AND CONTEMPTUOUS

ATTITUDE REFLECTED BY THE TIMING OF THESE TRIALS.
IT IS AS IF THE LEADERSHIP BELIEVES THAT IF IT
DEMONSTRATES ONCE AND FOR ALL ITS DISTASTE FOR U.S.
HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AS APPLIED TO U.S.-SOVIET RELATIDNS
THAT POLICY WILL BE CHANGED. THIS SEEMS TO US
TO REFLECT ONCE AGAIN A SERIOUS FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND
BOTH THE U.S. DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROCESS AND THE
NEGATIVE EFFECT IN THE WEST OF THE CYNICAL,
MANIPULATIVE FACE THESE ACTIONS SHOW TO THE
WORLD. TOON UNQTE CHRISTOPHER

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